

Opening Statement of  
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Before the  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations  
Committee on Veterans' Affairs  
U. S. House of Representatives

June 28, 2006

Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss the important issues related to the Information Technology (IT) reorganization efforts at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

I would like to provide the Committee with some background information to help in understanding my thought process regarding VA's IT reorganization.

At the time of my confirmation hearing as the VA's Chief Information Officer (CIO), the Department was faced with:

- (1) An ever expanding IT budget;
- (2) Programs that were defined in a "stovepipe" manner due to the lack of an Enterprise Architecture;
- (3) Programs that were consistently overrunning budget, behind schedule, and failing to meet their performance requirements;
- (4) Implementing a comprehensive cyber security program; and,
- (5) Having to implement an "executive level" oversight process which was a recurring deficiency identified by the General Accountability Office (GAO).

As a result of the above and as presented in my opening statement before the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee on 2 August 2001 during my confirmation hearing, I stated that I had five strategic objectives:

- (1) Complete the Enterprise Architecture road map to the future;
- (2) Integrate disparate telecommunications networks to improve performance and responsiveness for our Veterans;
- (3) Implement a strong information security program and infrastructure;
- (4) Create a program/project management process to oversee and help the VA information technology program/project managers deliver products that meet requirements, are delivered on time, and stay within budget; and,
- (5) Establish information technology metrics to continuously measure our ability to meet our Veterans' needs.

Although implementing a strong information security program is listed as number 3 in the above list, it **was** my number one priority. Establishing a comprehensive Enterprise

Architecture and integrating the telecommunications networks were placed higher in the order since I believe they are prerequisites to attacking the number one priority.

During my previous 32 year career in the United States Navy, I learned to address organizational issues by using the following simple thought process:

- (1) Define the problem to be solved;
- (2) Define the optimal, affordable solution to the problem;
- (3) Define what work would be accomplished by government and what work would be performed by industry; then,
- (4) Organize to implement.

Given the problems and strategic objectives defined above, I concluded that:

- (1) All IT programs and IT-related activities affecting the three Administrations and the VA Central Office should be centrally managed at the Department level with funding located in the Department's and not the Administrations' budgets. Specifically:
  - (a) Enterprise Architecture;
  - (b) Cyber Security except facility-specific Information Security Officers (ISOs);
  - (c) Telecommunications networks;
  - (d) Corporate data centers;
  - (e) Any program with the above characteristics that would result from developing a comprehensive Enterprise Architecture, such as VA-wide Registration and Eligibility and a central Call Center; and,
  - (f) All IT programs under the auspices of any VA Central Office staff code.
- (2) All development activities related to individual Administration IT programs should be managed at the Department level with funding from the Administration with the requirement for the program.
- (3) The operations and maintenance of in-service IT systems directly related to mission execution within an Administration should be managed by that Administration subject to a comprehensive budget and funding execution approval process with ultimate authority for approving the expenditure of funds residing in the office of the Department's CIO.

I recognize that the above conclusions are not consistent with current thinking, but I would respectfully ask the Committee to consider the following: without central management of the development activities, how will the Department ever implement a comprehensive department-wide Enterprise Architecture to eliminate duplication; cross-functionally integrate VA's IT business processes; and ultimately slow or stop the growth of the department's IT budget?

I hope information I have provided will help the Committee in its deliberations regarding VA's IT reorganization.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss these very important IT issues. I will be happy to answer your questions.